

**New York City Fire Department Response to Terrorism  
Testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science  
and Transportation**

Good Afternoon,

My name is Robert Ingram. I am a Battalion Chief in the New York City Fire Department and Executive Officer of Hazardous Material Operations. I was recently asked to chair a National Fire Protection Association Sub-Committee on Terrorism. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on the needs of the fire service in its efforts to respond to terrorism.

Sadly, the discussion on this topic has moved from the theoretical to the practical. Before September 11<sup>th</sup>, we never conceived of the possibility of such a horrific act or such a tragic consequence. The New York City Fire Department is now faced with not only a tragic personal toll (the devastating loss of 343 members) and the trauma for our families (more than 1000 children left fatherless) but also the loss of a knowledgeable, experienced group of leaders.

We lost some of our most experienced Chiefs as well as some of our most seasoned firefighters in this event. More than 90 members of our Special Operations Command, including our elite rescue and haz mat units were lost. Chief Ray Downey, the premiere collapse expert in the country was taken. My dear friend and colleague, Chief Jack Fanning, a noted expert who has testified on the very issue we are discussing today is among the missing.

We will have to rebuild the department and will have to make adjustments both in the short and long term to replicate their expertise. We have pledged to do so with our fallen comrades in mind. We owe it to them to do it in a way that preserves the legacy of professionalism and dedication they established. It is a debt we gladly pay.

The attack that occurred on September 11<sup>th</sup> is almost impossible to understand. The response is not. Hundreds of firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical professionals rushed to the World Trade Center with one thing in mind...to save lives. These were men and women who dedicated themselves to the service of others and wound up paying the ultimate price. They were the best trained, best equipped and most competent response force ever dispatched and before the day was over they effected the most successful rescue in history, safely evacuating more than 25,000 people from the World Trade complex prior to the collapse of the towers.

In the wake the World Trade Center attack, the FDNY will continue to expand training efforts and the use of new strategies and technologies to not only help us recover from the tragic events of that day but to further protect firefighters, EMS personnel and citizens.

I am thankful for the opportunity to appear before you today to ask for any assistance you can give us in reaching these goals. The FDNY has both short-term and long-term needs we are working to address.

One immediate need is to train a new group of firefighters to operate engines, ladder trucks and other emergency vehicles. Nearly 150 of these trained drivers were lost on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

While we are more than adequately fulfilling our day-to-day responsibilities, we must expedite the training of replacement drivers to bolster our ranks. To do so, the Department is seeking to purchase specially designed driving simulators that recreate the experience of operating these powerful and complicated vehicles.

A second short-term priority is to enhance our response to terrorism with additional training for firefighters in the handling of hazardous materials and other emergency procedures. Municipal fire

departments can find the instructors to teach these skills but often struggle to find the funds to enroll fire fighters and officers in such programs or to replace them so their daily duties can be covered while they are away from the job.

A related and equally important initiative is to provide protective clothing, respirators and equipment used to detect hazardous materials not only to our specially trained HAZMAT teams -- as we do now -- but also to other emergency units who are likely to arrive at the scene first.

A somewhat longer-term yet no less important project for the FDNY and other emergency services is employing technology to improve the safety of their members and the public.

We must continue to explore technological solutions that maximize our ability to protect our members regardless of the situations they face. Much like our successful experience broadening the use of thermal imaging cameras, we should explore communications solutions that are applicable in a variety of settings. Building in additional redundancy, diverse routing and flexibility within our communications and IT solutions is just one example.

We need to look at every phase of our operation and be ready to take advantage of new technology whether it's in the training, fire suppression, rescue or recovery phase of our operations. Examples run the gamut from the use of satellite phones for communications to vehicle or personal tracking systems to monitor the movements of equipment and personnel.

Finally, we'd urge stepped up efforts to monitor and analyze the nature of emergency medical calls on a regional basis. The FDNY and New York City Department of Health work closely to track the types of calls our EMTs and Paramedics respond to in hopes of spotting health trends. With better coordination of these efforts

between towns and cities in the same region, we might strengthen our national early warning system to spot potential health emergencies.

In addition to the issues I have brought to you today, implore you to revisit the testimony that Chief Fanning gave in May on behalf of the FDNY and the International Association of Fire Chiefs that also addresses first responder needs. I would be happy to make this testimony available to you

In closing, I am reminded of the words of our Chief of Department Peter Ganci who lost his life commanding the incident at the Trade Center. At a memorial service two years ago Chief Ganci said, “In our Department, at all ranks we contribute and at all ranks we’re vulnerable.”

Both our contributions and vulnerabilities were on display on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

We lost members from every rank, but at the same time witnessed heroism and courage that knew no bounds. As the nature of our world changes, we must insure that the latest training, equipment and other resources are available for any eventuality.

Thank you for your time.